

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes recent trends in traffic and travel in Boulder and the impacts of those trends on Boulder.

has grown at nearly 3% per year. This trend suggests that the original 1989 TMP objective of shifting 15% of trips from single-occupant vehicles to other modes (an objective toward which the City has made progress) may not be sufficient to prevent increases in traffic on Boulder's streets.

figure 2-1. growth in vehicular traffic - internal

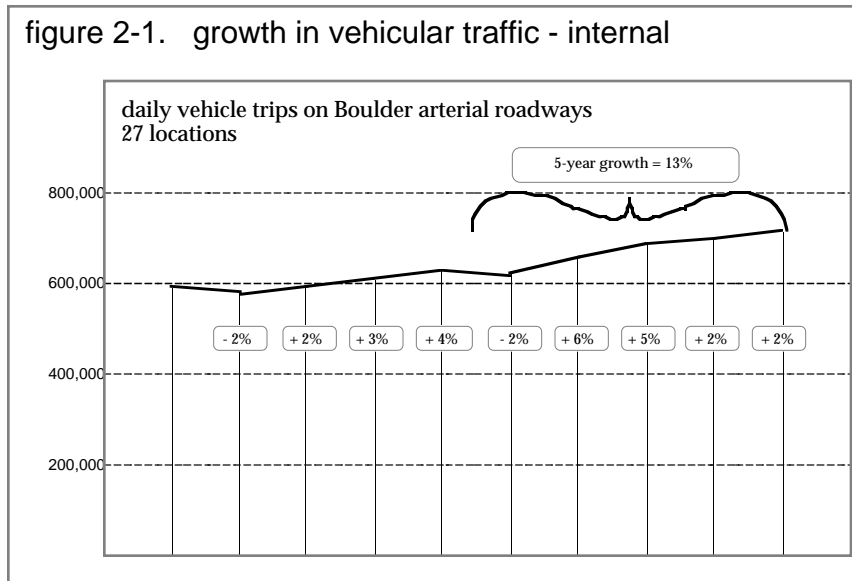


Figure 2-2 summarizes traffic data from 20 "external" count stations (locations on a screenline around the City). This data tracks traffic growth into and out of Boulder. This provides clues to some of the traffic growth on Boulder streets.

External traffic has been growing faster than internal traffic. This is consistent with data indicating that Boulder has seen employment growth that exceeds growth in population. The City also continues to be a retail and

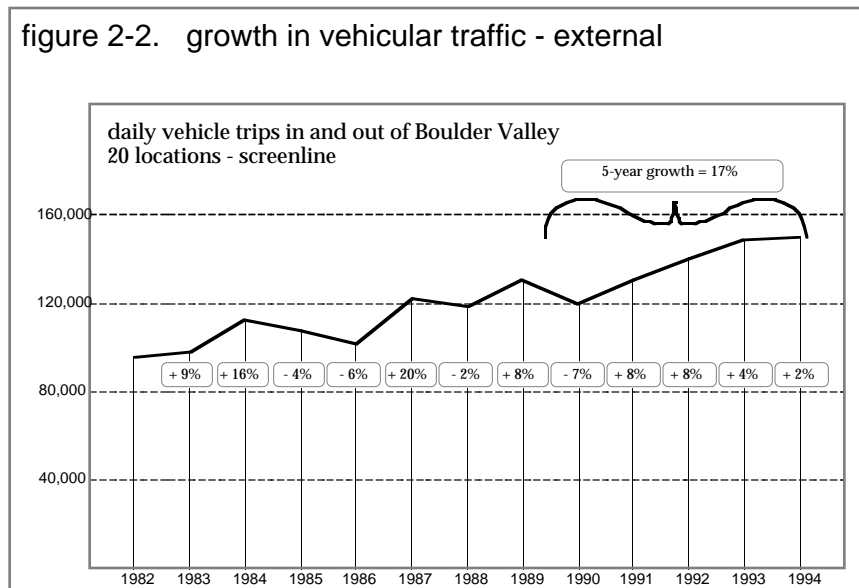
2.2 Traffic Trends

Boulder residents perceive an increase in vehicular traffic. They describe traffic today as "much worse" than just a few years ago. In fact, traffic has been increasing at a rate that would be noticeable to anyone routinely driving, walking or biking in Boulder.

Figure 2-1 summarizes data obtained at internal locations on arterial streets. This data has been collected since 1985 and offers a reading on trends in daily auto/truck traffic. Over the five years since adoption of the 1989 TMP, traffic on principal streets (Broadway, Iris, Arapahoe)

recreational center for Boulder County and much of the North Front Range.

figure 2-2. growth in vehicular traffic - external

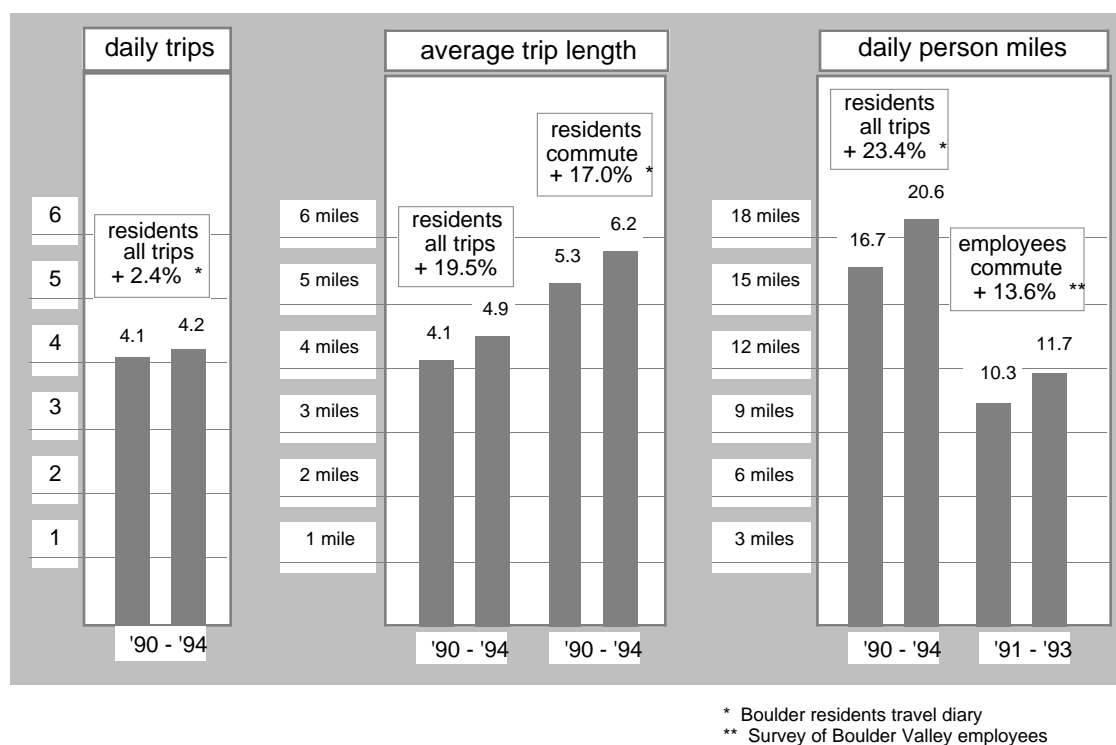


Clearly, the amount of daily traffic into and out of Boulder (as well as the amount of traffic on local streets) is influenced by regional trends in population, employment, and tourism.

This also suggests that preventing further increases in local vehicular traffic may require regional as well as local strategies.

These increases are due to underlying urban development and lifestyle trends. As land uses become more dispersed and favor single-use patterns (e.g., large residential areas with no commercial sites), people travel farther to conduct daily business. Evidence of this is provided by the pronounced trend toward longer average trip lengths.

figure 2-3. boulder - daily trips and average trip length



In addition to more regional travel, another important trend is affecting our traffic. Figure 2-3 provides data about daily per capita tripmaking - both by residents and by the people who hold jobs in Boulder.

Average daily personal travel is increasing rapidly. Per capita daily resident miles are increasing by 5% annually and per capita daily commute miles are increasing by 7% annually.

Also, our population changes jobs and place of residence more than previous generations. As a result, the proportion of people living close to where they work is diminished. Many two-worker households live in one city and work in two others.

Both trends - increases in regional travel and changes in personal travel behavior - are causing growing traffic on Boulder's streets.

2.3 Traffic Impacts

As important as these trends are the impacts of increased traffic on the city and its residents. Traffic and traffic congestion are consistently named as leading concerns of Boulder citizens. These impacts are felt in at least three ways:

Congestion and Delay. This is the effect that motorists experience. About 16% of Boulder's arterial and collector roadways are congested in peak periods (LOS F). This causes the driving experience to be stressful and causes travel across town to take longer - a major source of frustration. Drivers encounter stop and go conditions. Long queues of vehicles wait to clear traffic signals and more than one cycle is needed to get through major intersections.

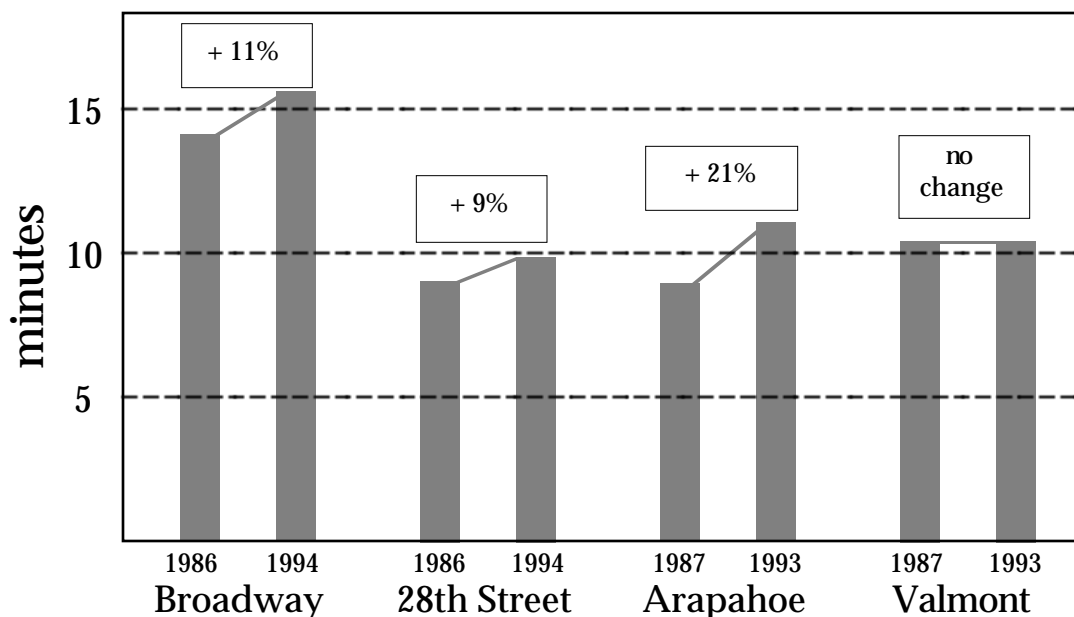
Figure 2-4 below provides data on how crosstown drive-times have changed recently.

Traffic on City Streets. Residents of Boulder neighborhoods and others who frequent our commercial areas observe higher levels of traffic than in the past. Neighborhoods are affected by cut-through traffic, often moving at inappropriate speeds. Commercial areas are harder to get to. There is more noise and activity; peace and tranquility are diminished.

Pedestrian Environment. People who walk in Boulder notice other effects. Sidewalks and crosswalks seem less safe. Things happen at a faster pace than before. Crossing the street is hazardous and walking along it is unpleasant. Driver impatience often makes this worse.

These quality of life issues are foremost in the public's thoughts. From these issues comes the public desire to prevent further increases in vehicular traffic, forming the basis for goals and objectives described in the next chapter.

figure 2-4. crosstown drive-time changes - peak hours



Based on "Drive Time Reports" City of Boulder. March, 1995.